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WOMEN EMANCIPATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN *HUSBAND*, BY LÍDIA JORGE

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ABSTRACT: In this article, we debate on the condition of women in society and their emancipation from the patriarchal system. The method used is phenomenological-hermeneutical, with qualitative approach, exploratory technique, and bibliographical procedure. The research problem is: to what extent does the domination of men manifest itself over the female subject's body and mind with aims at hindering their empowerment through acts of violence at home? This study is justified by the need and the urgency of understanding the historical constitutions of gender identities as a social, non-natural phenomenon. The research goal is to, at first, analyze patriarchy as a mechanism of superiority for men and of subjugation, submission and subjection for women. Secondly, this paper aims at understanding women's incorporation of patriarchal precepts as an obstacle to emancipation, confrontation and resistance to domestic violence, based on the analysis of the short story *Husband (Marido)*, by Portuguese writer Lídia Jorge. In conclusion, corroborating the starting hypothesis of the article, it appears that patriarchy hinders the emancipatory potential of women and, therefore, of human rights in the face of domination and violence by men.

KEYWORDS: gender; literature; women; patriarchy; violence.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Human Society has been biologically constituted by men and women. However, natural traits, such as sex, have been historically used to justify differences between genders. On the one hand, men have had a superior social condition; on the other hand, women have been in the bottom part of society and the family hierarchy. This configuration of a society constructed by individuals standardly male is seen as naturally belonging to every human being. Thus, gender discussions emerge in order to give the opportunity for further comprehension of such culturally established positions.

The current social organization is the result of traditions that trace back to the beginnings of human civilization, which have been majorly patriarchal. Based on that and on the short story *Husband (Marido)*, by the Portuguese writer Lídia Jorge, this research aims at answering the following question-problem: to what extent is it possible to consider the patriarchal tradition, as a millenary public and private social construct, forced over women – potentially capable of fighting masculine domination – and, consequently, as a signal of female resistance facing domestic violence?

This research, in order to reflect on the problem above, arises from the hypothesis that the patriarchal system is based on male behavior, but is also inscribed on the body and in the mind of women. The incorporation, by the female subject, of roles and spaces that are socially conformed and naturalized as intrinsic to the second sex, appears as a key obstacle to the emancipation of women and, consequently, to the confrontation of male domination, as is the case of silencing in the face of domestic violence. Such social setting, indeed, violates human rights.

The theoretical endeavor of this article is justified by the need and urgency of seeing the historical constitution of men and women's identities not as natural processes, but as cultural formations. With this, the idea is to establish understanding and suitable subsidies for the promotion of egalitarian dialogues between the sexes. So, considering the whole society as situated in a territorial and cultural context of patriarchal precepts, including the subject-authors of this very scientific investigation,

the phenomenological-hermeneutical “method” is adopted, with a qualitative approach, by means of an exploratory technique, and the bibliographic procedure.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, based on the production by Martin Heidegger (1998) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1999), constitutes a valuable tool within the scope this research’s intentions. It is not a matter of seeing the historical and current relationship between men and women solely from a legal perspective. It is also necessary to see it philosophically and sociologically, unveiling, ultimately, its nuances. In this sense, subjectivity, characteristic of knowledge producers, goes together with objectivity, an essential element for the scientific aspect of this study.

The theoretical backgrounds by Heidegger (1998) and Gadamer (1999) trace historicity and tradition as constitutive characteristics of people’s lives. Thus, the phenomenon analyzed hereby, focused on patriarchal society, is interpreted based on the researchers’ comprehension. There is no separating one reality from another, especially because comprehension comes before interpretation, which is the final objective of the worldviews that compose human existence. This “method” makes it possible, then, to unveil things by themselves, shedding a revealing light over what was not so visible.

Phenomenology, the study of phenomena, walks together with hermeneutics, which is the main instrument for understanding ideas. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as a “method”, based on Ernildo Stein (2001, p. 169), contributes to make it possible to “access the phenomenon in a phenomenological way”, which reveals, as a consequence, what is “at first and usually not seen as a reality”. This is due to the fact that individuals *per se* are hermeneutical phenomena, so, in the words by Stein (2001, p. 188, translated), within every person there is a “previous comprehension, founder of all consequent hermeneutics”.

This article, based on the context previously stated, is structured in two sections. It aims at the following objectives: a) analyzing male domination, in the patriarchal system, as a hierarchical mechanism of

male superiority and female subjugation, submission and subjection; b) based on the short story *Husband*, by Lúcia Jorge, analyzing the incorporation of the patriarchal command over the body and the mind of women as an obstacle to female emancipation and to the fight against domestic violence.

2 BETWEEN WHAT IS NATURAL AND WHAT IS NATURALIZED IN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS: SEXUAL CONTRACT, PATRIARCAL SYSTEM, AND FEMALE SUBJECTION

Women as things; women as subjects. Women as private brands; women as public pathfinders. Women as lacking beings; women as complete beings. Women as the portrait of submission; women as the sign of empowerment. History has made different spaces, different characteristics, different abilities, different flaws, different images of the female profile. The concept of woman is a constant construction of all societies and periods based on a dichotomy to man.

“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman”, as written by Simone de Beauvoir (1980b, p. 9, translated), an idea that inflated the debates about gender construction in the 20th century. Beauvoir’s statement (1980b, p. 9, translated) is based on the idea that women are thus defined due to a series of factors throughout history in relation to the human being, since “no biological, psychical, economic destiny defines the figure that the female human presents in society”, but, rather, “it is the whole of civilization that develops this intermediate product between male and eunuch that qualifies as female”.

The understanding of Heleieth Saffioti (2001b, p. 10, translated), according to which “human beings are born male or female” and through the education received they are constituted into men and women is also not easy to be digested in a society that is markedly patriarchal. The confrontation between what is natural and what is naturalized has been present in the discussions about the situation of women since Antiquity. Biological features and socially constructed elements are continuously contrasted with the intention of proving or refuting theses about gender identity, as well as the place and the identity of woman.

Gender discussions are not necessarily from Modern Times. The debates started in the 19th century, however, were the ones responsible for bringing emancipatory policies for the population of women. The figure of woman was seen as inferior to man, and until the present some people defend such conceptions. Regarding that, Beauvoir (1980a, p. 16, translated) states that “since ancient times moralists and satirists have delighted in showing up female weaknesses”.

Indeed, when detailing the constitution of the State as a fruit of individuals’ union into families, burghs, villages, Aristotle (2011) granted to woman a lesser status at home, and, especially, in society. Man and woman, in the conception of Aristotle (2011, p. 20, translated), “cannot exist without one another, due to reproduction”. In spite of the idea of complementarity between the two sexes, Aristotle and the whole Greek society saw women as “complete” beings only if they were attached to a man, and even so, with countless restrictions, especially in the public sphere.

In the interpretation by Joice Graciele Nielsson (2016), the Aristotelian theory supports the existence of inequalities between the sexes with regard to cognitive capacities and active capabilities. This is because the female gender is seen as inferior to man supposedly due to not having the conditions to go beyond the sphere of opinions and presenting reduced proficiency of practical wisdom, when understanding that women, “although they are able to deliberate, they do not have authority in the decisions they take, given how easily they are guided and dominated by emotions and feelings” (Nielsson, 2016, p. 38, translated).

In antique times, however, the woman was not solely seen for her reproductive, subservient traits, or even as an object of the male subject. It is possible to find in the Socratic dialogues brought by Plato (2011) dialogues about the feminine position within society, which, although incipient and full of doubts, seem to demonstrate novelty and a certain care with the debate. The condition of women, moreover, is not immediately reduced hierarchically in the face of men, but, rather, is

questioned around the uncertainty of the female constitution in relation to man.

The dubiousness regarding the character of the woman is clear in the following sentence: “For we have given women similar birth and education, so let us see whether the result is suitable for our purposes” (Plato, 2011, p. 192, translated). Thus, it is a matter of aiming at feasible answers about the female characteristics and not, on the contrary, sustaining the prior inferiority of sex based on biological assumptions – which is still defended by some, nowadays. The linearity of the Socratic dialogue follows in this direction, with emphasis on work assignments, when affirming:

– And if the two sexes seem to us to differ in their aptitude for any art or profession, we may say that such profession or art must be attributed to this or that sex; but, if diversity constitutes only the fact that women have children and men procreate them, this does not prove that a woman is different from a man in terms of the education that should be given to both (Plato, 2011, p. 197, translated).

The pretension of empirically verifying possible similarities and differences between women and men, without ensuring an initial thesis of equality or hierarchical disparity between the sexes does not, however, prevent the conformation of the male being as a procreator and of the female person as responsible for the offspring. This means, at the same time that it puts in doubt the capabilities of the woman, the construction of different functionalities between the sexes – in this case, in the domestic sphere. The contrast – believed to be physiological – between women and men is corroborated in the following claim:

- Therefore, my friend, there is no occupation in the city regulation that is proper to the woman as such, nor to the man as such, but the natural gifts are distributed equally among them; all occupations proper to men are also characteristic to women, but the latter are in everything weaker than the former (Plato, 2011, p. 198, translated).

As a matter of fact, the Platonic writings, in Nielsson’s interpretation (2016), can be understood as incompatible in a sense. On the one hand, the old conception of women as different, inferior and, therefore, subordinate to men is maintained; on the other hand, the analysis of the

female guardians, in an attempt to establish a fair and happy city, is revolutionary, because, “given the identity of nature between men and women as to their soul, the dialog argues that some civic tasks should be shared with some women, the best ones among the guardians, which in a way implies equal access to adequate education” (Nielsson, 2016, p. 25, translated).

However the woman’s figure is put under analysis given the doubt about its characteristics, the conversation maintains traits that denote weaknesses, disadvantages, limits of the woman as opposed to the man. This does not detract from the importance of the Socratic dialogues for the discussion regarding gender, which expressively emerges with the feminist movement in the contemporary context. The theoretical framework built up to date still reflects the patriarchal, oppressive and dominant system as a suitable space for the subjection of women.

The patriarchal hierarchy, as a social order established for millennia in human history, is understood by Carole Pateman (1993) as the institutionalized structure in the State with the advent of the original contract, which concerns, on the one hand, to the social contract³, and, on the other hand, to the sexual contract. However, the traditional theorists of the modern formulation of the state do not discuss, in the view of Pateman (1993), the whole history of the sexual-social pact established in the political and civil society.

The theoretical background on the foundation of the State is lacking in relation to the differentiation between man and woman. This is due to the fact that the history of the sexual contract is also related to political law, which, therefore, explains its legitimacy, despite treating political law as a “*patriarchal law* or instance of the sexual” (Pateman, 1993, p. 16, emphasis in the original, translated). Indeed, the social configuration

³ The social contract is the modern symbol of State formation. The contractual theory, mainly developed by Thomas Hobbes (2017), John Locke (2002), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2015), defends the foundation of the State institution as a result of the desire of men to leave the State of nature. The emergence of the civil status is justified, however, for several reasons, since Hobbes (2017) supports the agreement between individuals with a view to the safety of all, whereas Locke (2002) argues that the State entity stems from the need to protect property, and Rousseau (2015) understands that the assumption of the State has the ability to create conditions of equality between the subjects.

throughout history, with which men tend to exercise power over women, results from an agreement at the origin of the political-social structure, whose process concomitantly creates freedom – for men – and domination – of women.

Sexual difference, in this context, concerns the difference between freedom and subjection. Thus, men were given the freedom to participate in the original contract, whereby they gave up natural freedom to achieve the security of civil freedom; women, however, were only objects in the contract. This is precisely because “[the] sexual contract is the means by which men transform their natural right over women into the security of civil patriarchal law (Pateman, 1993, p. 21, translated).

Hence, patriarchal society is not linked solely to the private sphere. The space for the manifestation of male power expands from the domestic sphere and reaches the public field, since the original contract includes the foundation of the State as an institution that regulates life in society. Therefore, if the pact gave rise to the construction of the State, the patriarchal structure is also inscribed in the political domain itself. Thus, according to Pateman (1993, p. 29, translated), “[men] pass from one side to the other, between the private and public spheres, and the rule of the male sexual law governs both places”.

Public and private fields are based, therefore, on criteria of human domination. The house can be understood as the inaugural place for the exercise of patriarchal dictates, also because for millennia women have been reserved only for the domestic space, subordinated to male mandates. The public world, formerly a man’s environment, today receives women, but still under the hegemony of those who have historically carried and perpetuates the patriarchal status, as a reflection, therefore, of the sexual-social contract.

The rise of the capitalist economic system, especially from the eighteenth century, with an emphasis on the mid-twentieth century due to globalization, shows itself as another elementary factor in the web of patriarchal relations of domination and oppression. A situation so outlined makes Joaquín Herrera Flores (2005, p. 29, translated) use the

term “patriarchalism”⁴, and not “patriarchy”, with aims of reflecting “the basis and support of all types of authoritarian domination. and totalitarianism”:

[...] The word “patriarchy” is a theoretical category that “seems” to have no specific historical origins and that affects only a certain group (that of women in the abstract) and, within it, the group of individuals who have the power and the cultural ability to name it. However, the concept of *patriarchalism* has more to do with the set of relationships that articulate an undifferentiated set of oppressions: sex, race, gender, ethnicity, and social class, and how particular social relationships *combine* a public dimension of power, exploitation or status with a dimension of personal servility. *Patriarchalism* is a much more appropriate term in that it *makes us see* how patriarchal relations are articulated with other forms of social relation at a certain historical moment. [...] (Herrera Flores, 2015, p. 29, emphasis in the original, translated).

So, capitalism, as a hegemonic economic system, greatly influences gender relations, with results in private and public contexts. Since the assumption of the capitalist model until today, the labor condition of women follows the patriarchal order, as in the case of having lower wages than men. This, for Luis Felipe Miguel (2017, p. 1.223, translated), happens because “family arrangements, dominant moral conventions and the functioning of the labor market have acted together, and [women’s] position in the class structure took on different characteristics from those of men”.

Work assignments, socially given to each sex, are perceptible in the course of history, in order, moreover, to demonstrate that the doubts expressed in the Socratic dialogues, in spite of having been answered, were not successful in allowing women the same opportunities. This is notorious, in the light of Susan Moller Okin (2008, p. 307-308,

⁴ Patriarchalism can be defined, according to Joaquín Herrera Flores (2005, p. 31-32, emphasis added in the original, translated), based on three aspects: “[...] first, *politically*, patriarchalism supposes a configuration of reality in it that presses abstractness onto concreteness, ‘promised’ functions onto relationships and inequality onto equality; second, *axiologically*, patriarchy impels a set of values, compliance and undivided attitudes, not deductible, of reality, from which any human group is embraced ‘by nature’ with superiority over the rest; and, thirdly, *sociologically*, patriarchy constitutes the basis of exclusion, that means, the set of mechanisms rooted in the structure of society from certain individuals and groups that are systematically rejected or systematically displaced from full participation in dominant culture, economics and politics in that society at a given historical moment”.

translated), when she states that “[men] are seen, above all, as linked to the occupations in the sphere of economic and political life, and responsible for them, whereas women are responsible for occupations in the household sphere and for reproduction”.

The female role of looking after the home and children, in the context of a society founded on patriarchal principles, does not represent a woman’s choice, but men’s designation. In the same sense, it is not correct to say that the domestic sphere is exclusive to women, since the control of men does not disappear in that context as well. The job of women in domestic services stems, according to Okin (2008, p. 308, translated), from the conception that they are “seen as ‘naturally’ inappropriate to the public sphere, while dependent on men and subordinate to their family”.

This dichotomy of the public sphere with the private sphere is also at the heart of modern times. In the conception of Flávia Biroli (2014, p. 32, translated), “the public sphere is thus based on universal principles, reason and impersonality, whereas the private sphere harbors personal and intimate relationships”. This condition, established through social conventions, marked the place to be occupied by women, which has naturalized the functions and actions based on the biological instance. The notion of nature rises as a strategic discourse that legitimizes inequalities, as well as human rights (BIROLI, 2014).

The ideas of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man are currently conceived as the fruit of social constructions and, therefore, not as a fixation of nature. Indeed, according to Saffioti (2001b, p. 8, emphasis added in the original, translated), the social body assigns different roles for women and men, with which “[society] defines, with great precision, the fields where woman *can* be, in the same way that it chooses the fields where man *can* act”. This means the lack of a genetic predisposition as the fundamental reason for the public-private difference established for the sexes.

However, what happens is the naturalization of facts that are not natural. The historical situation of women as responsible for the domestic field and the historical scenario of men as responsible for the public field, both as results of social constructions, are considered natural and,

consequently, legitimate. “[...] When it is stated that it is natural for women to take care of the domestic space, leaving the public space free for men, one is strictly *naturalizing* a result of history” (Saffioti, 2001b, p. 11, emphasis in the original, translated).

Gender discussions, mainly promoted since from the 20th century, aim precisely at analyzing the configuration of the subjects – woman and man – as a result of socially established identities. In this sense, according to Joan Scott (1995, p. 75, translated), the term “gender”⁵, understood as an analytical category, assumes the function of designating many “cultural constructions”, that is, “the entirely social creation of ideas about the roles said appropriate to men and women”. In other words, it is about understanding subjective identities as originating from collective society.

In order to understand gender, Judith Butler (2010, p. 48, translated), says “gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of floating attributes”, but rather, “its substantive effect is performatively produced and imposed by regulatory practices of gender coherence”, which is why “gender is always an accomplishment, even if it is not the work of a subject considered to be pre-existing to the work”. With new horizons of reflection from nature to culture, gender theories constitute, according to Nadya Araujo Guimarães and Helena Hirata (2014, p. 9, translated), as an instrument of “undeniable heuristic value for understanding the social and the political spheres, raising questionings and proposing new paradigms”.

In such a setting, the feminist movement is, nowadays, a theoretical and militant mechanism to confront the naturalization – or normalization – of patriarchal society, that is, a weapon in the face of the culturally established image of women inferiority and man superiority. Thus, according to Scott (1995, p. 84, translated), “[the] history of feminist thought is a history of the refusal of the hierarchical construction of the relationship between male and female, in their specific contexts, and an

⁵ For Joan Scott (1995, p. 86, translated), the definition of “gender” refers to the connection of two ideas: “(1) gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on the perceived differences between the sexes, and (2) gender is a primary way of giving meaning to power relations”.

attempt to reverse or displace their operations” with aims at following human rights.

The contemporary feminist agenda is based, therefore, in an attempt to alter the naturalization of socially constructed phenomena with the interest of promoting the formation of a society that is capable of dialogue and, consequently, of not imposing the idea of different levels due only to sexual difference. Feminism emerges, then, in the view of Céli Regina Jardim Pinto (2010, p. 16, translated), “as a libertarian movement”, which, more than reaching more space for women, fights “for a new form of relationship between man and woman, in which the latter has freedom and autonomy to decide about her life and her body”.

However, the history of women submission to men is not an easy element to be transposed. Female subjugation, in addition to being imprinted in men, is often inscribed within the woman’s body and mind, as reflected by Pierre Bourdieu (2017, p. 96, translated):

Male domination, which constitutes women as symbolic objects, whose being (*esse*) is a perceived being (*percipi*), has the effect of putting them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or rather, of symbolic dependence: they exist due to and for the eyes of others, that is, as receptive, attractive, available objects. They are expected to be “feminine”, that is, smiling, friendly, attentive, submissive, discreet, contained or even erased. And the so-called “femininity” is often nothing more than a form of acquiescence in relation to male expectations, real or supposed, mainly in terms of ego enlargement. As a consequence, dependence on others (and not only on men) tends to become constitutive of their being.

Therefore, the dilemma is still present in the complex need for women, by themselves, to break free from the domination, since, according to Beauvoir (1980b, p. 364, translated), the woman tends to accept the male universe feeling on a lower and dependent scale, also because “she did not learn the lessons of violence, she never emerged, as a subject, in the face of other members of the community; closed in her flesh, in her house, she apprehends herself as passive in the face of these human figure gods that define ends and values”. All this because “this world has always belonged to men” (Beauvoir, 1980a, p. 81, translated).

The patriarchal system, therefore, establishes itself as the historical name of the social structure and imposes the subjugation of women to the domination of men. Gender struggles, especially fought by the feminist movement, have brought significant achievements to the population of women, although the desired deconstruction of the sexual hierarchy is still ongoing, just as the context of inferiority remains in the woman's body and mind. This is clear in the short story *Husband*, (originally *Marido*), written by Lília Jorge, which, as a portrait of gender violence and the condition of female subordination, is analyzed as follows.

3 FROM POTENTIAL TO ACTUAL EMANCIPATION: GENDER VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT STORY *HUSBAND*, WRITTEN BY LÍLIA JORGE

The growing possibility of change; the obstacles to it. The ability to break patriarchal dictates; the difficulties for emancipation. The perception of oneself as submissive; the obstacle of feeling incapable. Many achievements by women to the present day have shown the strength of the female population in fighting for recognition and human rights⁶. The historical domination of man over woman, however, is not easy to overcome. Feelings of fear, inferiority, incompleteness and belonging help understanding the condition of women and the challenges to empowerment.

Domestic relations are predominantly set as spaces of male domination. From marriage, as a civil and religious celebration, men traditionally constitute themselves as the heads and sovereigns of the family, which conditions women to an unequal status, given that, according to Beauvoir (1980b, p. 116, translated), “[both] genders are necessary to each other, but such need has never implied any reciprocity; never have women constituted themselves as a caste that could establish equal footing with the caste of men”.

⁶ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), as well as other declarative texts, treaties and national laws, proclaims equal rights between men and women and establishes in Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights [...]”.

As if the disparity of rights and duties between spouses were not enough – which, by extension, applies to some extent to relationships such as dating or stable union character – marriage presents itself not as the choice of the woman, but, above all, as an imposition of the social body. This situation is clear when Beauvoir (1980b, p. 165, translated) states that “[the] destiny that society traditionally proposes to women is marriage”, also because, “[in] the majority, even today, women are either married, were married, or are preparing to be married, or even suffer for not being married”.

In the core of “love” relationships – and inside the house, women and men tend to build conflicting, disruptive, disjointed situations. In the view of Saffioti (2001a), an egalitarian relationship is possible to be established, despite this rarely occurring due to the absurdity of a democratic coexistence between the two sexes in the context of a situation shaped in the opposite direction. The result of the inability to – or even the desire not to – promote a marriage, courtship or stable union without hierarchy is the origin of violence against women.

The feeling of fear that surrounds women in the married relationship, which should, in theory, meet affective conventions, strengthens the signs of male domination. The subjugation unto man’s orders takes place in daily life, although, at times, covered up by a supposed aura of love, devotion, respect. Indeed, according to Saffioti (1999, p. 84, translated), “the threat of male aggression hangs over the head of all women, and works as a mechanism of subjection to men, inscribed in gender relations”.

This violence – conceptualized as gender, domestic, family, or matrimonial violence – shows, in fact, man’s dominance over the woman’s body and mind, as the aggression emanating from the male subject can impact physically, mentally and morally. The manifestations of violence, which, according to Lourdes Maria Bandeira (2014, p. 460, translated), constitute a phenomenon of “persistent, multiform and articulate” character, are means of “establishing a relationship of submission or of power, always implying in situations of fear, isolation, dependence and intimidation for women”, either by real or symbolic strength.

Literature shows itself as a considerable tool of knowledge, diffusion and foundation in search of awareness about the violation of human rights, and it can be referred to with the ambition to unveil the nuances surrounding the scenario of domestic violence. Fiction thus assumes and receives the mission of contributing to the world of facts. Although, according to Douglas Ceccagno (2015), literature does not meet the criterion of truth, it has the ability to externalize power relations. Acts of power, as well as its theory, are at the heart of female existence, which is perfected with the idealization of truth as a result of statement validation.

The truth is, above all, a collectively established notion. A society with traces of male domination to the detriment of women is the aim of many assertions conceived as true, the basis of which lies in the intricacies of power. For this reason, in the words by Hilda Helena Soares Bentes (2016, p. 148), literature has the power to clarify “the social injustices and inhumanities to which those who do not have the power to speak and narrate their story are subjugated, according to the reputed cultural standards that are valid for the social and political community”.

The world of ideas, embodied in literature, is a place of unease and, therefore, of transformation. Literature, identified as a human right in the view of Carolina Reis Theodoro da Silva and Pedro Pulzatto Peruzzo (2019, p. 535, translated), “carries with it several functions and is capable of arousing in the reader social, political, ideological, liberating and cathartic thoughts”. Fictional works do not detach from reality, they essentially portray it. They contribute to the affirmation of the individual in their connection with society. Indeed, the fictional world makes it possible to read the real world.

The short story *Husband* (*Marido*), by the writer Lídia Jorge (2002), provides, in this context, a valid and important analysis about the female condition in the domestic sphere. The story is fictional – but it represents an everyday aspect of society – has a main character who assumes the habitually diffuse role of subjection to man, disregarding any attitude that may cause her to emancipate from the dilemma that she daily experiences in her own home. The inferiority of sex and the sense of belonging to her husband make her find a comfort zone in her supposed

destiny, biologically and religiously set, even if her intrinsic human rights are constantly violated.

The title of the narrative alone reveals the attempt to unveil the characteristics of a society that speaks for marriage and for the elevation of men at the expense of women. According to Ana Maria Vasconcelos Martins de Castro (2013, p. 105, translated), the title *Husband* refers exclusively to the condition of the man in the marital relationship, placing him, then, in prominence, “assuming a tethered and hidden female, who is only implied by the title of the short story”, since the existence of a husband leads to the understanding that there is a wife.

This way, with the supremacy of the male subject, the plot develops. On the one hand, the wife, whose identification in the course of the text is based on her professional performance as a gatekeeper in the building where she resides; on the other hand, the husband, whose mention, although working as a mechanic, is restricted to his marital status, which portrays him only, according to Castro (2013, p. 105, translated), as “complete in his condition as a man with a woman”. And this is the aspect that we aim to highlight as regards the disparate situation of women and men in marriage.

The husband stays at the car shop until five o’clock. From that time on, the dilemma of the wife gatekeeper, because, despite leaving work at five, his arrival at home is uncertain, considering that “[...] between five and seven, the husband prefers to go to places that the gatekeeper does not even know, and leaves these places with his eyes filled with the glass’s sparkle” (Jorge, 2002, translated). For this reason, “[the] gatekeeper at five to five lights the candle, and prays for him to arrive before dinner” (Jorge, 2002, translated), alluding to the Hail Holy Queen Mary prayer, which accompanies the whole story.

The moment the husband arrives, the woman’s torment, however, does not end; on the contrary, it is with the husband’s coming home that fear invades the gatekeeper’s heart:

She hears him ringing, then climbing, opening the elevator door with difficulty, leaving it slowly with a stiff foot, and then the key starts to fall next to the door, she hears him lifting it off the floor, he must be turning the key, then at last he puts it in, moves it, detaches it, pulls it out, stays inside the house and the house is filled with his breath to the basins and the windows. He stumbles

on the living room sofa and calls out – *Lúcia! Hey Lúcia!* And the call goes through the walls of the small place, next to the chimneys and the antennas, to the rain drains, and spreads to the insides of the entire building, and to the balcony where the woman is hidden, behind the cages, protected by the invisible hand of the Holy Regina [...] (Jorge, 2002, emphasis in original, translated).

The route taken by the husband between arriving at the building and entering the residence is meticulously detailed. The wife, who apparently fears for life given the fact she hides on the balcony and prays for Regina's protection – Hail Holy Queen –, is identified by her submission, by her silence, by her indisposition. Prayers, which contextualize the whole routine experienced by the wife, are a central element, mainly because, according to Cíntia Schwantes and Paula Queiroz Dutra (2016, p. 156, translated), "the religious discourse also imprisons Lúcia, who believes that her faith and prayers will save her from her husband's aggressiveness".

The voice of woman, historically silenced, is said to be sweet, with a sweetness that places it as submissive, as inferior, unable to empower itself. In the story the harm caused by the husband, the fear installed in Lúcia's daily life and her desire to establish a better relationship are visible, although omitted in her action. In fact, the refuge used by the gatekeeper is muted. The plea for prayer is sung under the breath, she "sometimes only moves her lips to the window so as not to attract the neighbors' anger", despite knowing that "if she sang louder, she would better reach Regina's ears" (Jorge, 2002, translated).

The gatekeeper seems to internalize the social discourse of women's subjugation to the desires of men. It is as though her very existence and her problems are too small in comparison to the others'; it is as if her voice and her reaction to masculine drives should be left out of sight. However, the neighbors of the building knew the reality experienced by the gatekeeper: not her routine as a professional, but her rituals as a wife. The fifth-floor lawyer, the second-floor doctor, and the third-floor social worker had noticed her situation and wanted to help her, but she didn't understand. She didn't understand that they really wanted to help.

The woman could never divorce her husband. Despite everything, she just couldn't. She couldn't because "a man is a man, and a sacrament

is still more than a man because that is a bond between two and not a part of it perishes on Earth” (Jorge, 2002, translated). Marriage, notably devised in its religious sense, alongside all the patriarchal outlines, is the representation of what cannot be undone by human decision, essentially if that decision results from the second sex, especially because, according to Schwantes and Dutra (2016), breaking up marriage makes women dishonored and incomplete, even if they are regularly hurt in any way.

The idea of feminine incompleteness, by the way, is clear in the character of the story. Her life is considered as wholesome only on the condition that she is linked to man, since the absence of the husband corresponds to the existence of only half of herself. The neighbors –the lawyer, the doctor, and the social worker – have advised her to divorce, but the gatekeeper thought they had joined together against her husband and – why not say – against her happiness, mainly because she understood her dependence on the man, that is, she fully accepted woman’s socially established roles as a lacking being.

The recommendation of the neighbors incited a complex chain of thoughts for the gatekeeper, but all her ideas were always limited to the inscription, in her body and in her mind, of her subjection to the male dominance. The possibility of divorce was thus presented as unreal, unacceptable, distant. “Life seemed completely absurd to her, as if everyone had united to rip half of her body off. [...] What a sad idea the social worker said, that a woman was a complete being” (Jorge, 2002, translated). This corresponds to her compliance to the rules of patriarchy and of human rights violators.

Lúcia’s life seems to only make sense due to the existence of her husband. It is as if the existence of the woman was only possible with the existence of the man. Therefore, according to Castro (2013, p. 107, translated), “[if] it is the husband who, in the distorted view of the gatekeeper, makes her socially exist – and be whole –, there is, in her horizon, no possibility of divorce”, because the “only way of existence known to her was with and for her husband”. Any events, such as acts of violence, are thus supposedly justified by the fact that her existence to depends on the existence of her husband.

Considering the historical tradition imposes female subjugation to male rules, considering the social culture of women submission to men has been naturalized, and considering the first sex still holds the monopoly of power and violence, the gatekeeper, according to Castro (2013, p. 107, translated), is hindered of facing her subservient condition “because of what she learned as normal in the world”. And normality, in addition to maintaining her imprisonment, demands to take care of her man, which the gatekeeper does, mainly and daily, through prayer, perhaps her only language, given her almost complete silence.

The decision of having a divorce is seen by the character as impossible, due to the acceptance of her socially outlined destiny and the idea of a conspiracy formed by the neighbors. The advice of the building residents, in this way, does not offer help to the doorkeeper, but states the need for a change in behavior. It is in her alteration of behavior that the wife’s final and fateful story lies. She decides to wait for her husband’s arrival, regardless of the time, and, the moment he enters the house, the woman will be waiting for him in front of the door, without him having to shout for her name.

The husband comes and the gatekeeper is there. He reacts with surprise when he sees her awake and willing to help him. At the smell of oil and alcohol, the woman takes her loved one to the bedroom, “without noise, without that cry for *Lúcia* echoing throughout the building” and “without dragging any shoes, without beating any furniture” (Jorge, 2002, emphasis in the original, translated). Everything seems to go well with the wife’s decision and conviction: the neighbors would be wrong. However, the peace and quiet desired by the gatekeeper when her husband arrived would culminate in her eternal silence.

The couple’s night will indeed be noiseless. It was the gatekeeper’s wish. “Even if he brings the lighter to her face and passes it through her hair. She will move away from the lighter” (Jorge, 2002, translated). All the neighbors could sleep peacefully, also because the husband did not intend to set his wife’s hair on fire, but only to light the candle – the candle, by the way, which served as a symbol for her constant prayers. The glow of the candle, however, attracts her husband. He brings it close to the gatekeeper, “pulls her clothes, brings the candle close to the nylon shirt,

bright and silent. Put fire on it. Did it catch fire? Did the shirt catch fire?” (Jorge, 2002, translated).

The gatekeeper’s life is swallowed up by fate. A fate written by human hands. A destiny established in a society founded on patriarchal precepts, which, although the residents of the building sought to break, were inculcated in her being a woman. With her body on fire:

She turns around, gets out of bed, rubs herself against the wall, the fire doesn’t spread first, then suddenly spreads, gluing onto her, goes up to her hair, she throws herself on the floor, on the living room carpet, next to the door, then opens the door [...] The door is open to the flames. The gatekeeper’s flames go down the service ladder, running without noise until the eighth, seventh, and sixth floor. Only on the fifth does the gatekeeper’s flames stop. They crackle. It’s the lawyer’s door. Without noise, at the door of the lawyer, of the witnesses, of the law. Regina wants it that way. [...] Spread her wings, advocate, take flight, take the gatekeeper, lead her up, Regina, separate her definitely from the bed, the bucket and the stove. [...] Take her without noise, without siren, without whistle, without shirt, without hair, without skin, *post hoc exilium ostende* (Jorge, 2002, translated).

Death brings an end to the gatekeeper’s submission, but it does not end male dominance and the subjection of women. It is by the door of the lawyer, who, according to Schwantes and Dutra (2016, p. 159, translated), “represents justice and the State, as well as the witnesses, that Lúcia burns to death in silence”, in complete violation of human rights. According to Schwantes and Dutra (2016), silence symbolizes the female subordination that hinders speech, given that women were taught to remain silent, even in a marriage in which they are violated in the most diverse ways.

The short story by Lídia Jorge (2002) is thus a literary instrument of significance about the strength of the patriarchal system, which, in the narrative, brings together elements of male supremacy and religious dogma. In such a context, the challenge of female emancipation is even more complex, since, according to Viviane Vasconcelos (2017, p. 50, translated), the character, “when responding for the first time to her husband’s behavior, waiting for him without hiding, ends up destroyed in the flames of the candle that had always been the intermediary between the real world and another reality, illuminated and superior”.

The woman's silenced life culminated her also silent death. The gatekeeper's voice, which in the story is heard only in reference to prayers, was continually muted, including, according to Vasconcelos (2017, p. 50, translated), "not even heard at the moment of death, as the cry was not granted to her at the time her body was set on fire". In this scenario, the constitutive factor of female submission is seen, given the lack of perception of the role of the gatekeeper with regard to her own history and, consequently, the possibility of claiming her space and her fullness as a subject facing violence.

The lack of resistance to the hegemonic model of male domination is, however, understandable considering the idea, according to Castro (2013), that the gatekeeper was taught of her incompleteness as a woman; therefore, it would be inconsistent to imagine her with a combative attitude towards this worldview. In this sense, according to Castro (2013, p. 114, translated), the character's situation is moving, since "she cannot fight because she doesn't know she can fight, and, even so, stutteringly, she turns against her man", although the gatekeeper's decision had the power to lead her to the eternal silence of her life.

It evidences, in the analysis of Schwantes and Dutra (2016, p. 157, translated), that the advice given by the neighbors opened a possibility of confrontation for the woman, but "the cultural ties of social roles" made it impossible for her to accept the aid proposed by the lawyer, the doctor, and the social worker. In a situation such as this, it is visible, in its concreteness, the relation built by Aristotle (2010, p. 61, translated) in what concerns the potentiality⁷ and the actuality⁸, that is, the condition of something to be done, on the one hand, and the effectiveness of potency as an act, on the other hand:

We say that the substance is one of the genera of the being. It is, in a first sense, matter, which is not, in itself, this being; in another sense, it is the way in which

⁷ Potentiality, according to Nicola Abbagnano (2007, p. 782, translated), refers, in general, with reference to Aristotle, to the principle or the possibility of change and consists especially in the "capacity to change something else or oneself", as being the active power; in the "capacity to undergo change, caused by something else or by oneself", as being the passive power; and the "ability to change or be changed for the better and not for the worse".

⁸ Actuality, according to Abbagnano (2007, p. 90-91, translated), refers to the "[...] reality that has been or is being carried out, of the being that has reached or is reaching its full and final form, in contrast with what is simply potential or possible".

this being and the aspect is said; and, in a third sense, it is the compound of matter and form. Now, matter is potency, while form is an act. This is done in two ways: in one, as is knowledge; in the other, as is the exercise of knowledge.

The whole existence of the gatekeeper, as a representation of a female crowd, consisted of the potentiality to fight against male hegemony, that is, the possibility of facing the patriarchal tradition and, consequently, becoming emancipated, or, minimally, having the power of having power. However, the internalization of subjugation, submission and subjection made it impossible for Lúcia to consummate the potentiality to act, that is, the ability to understand the recommendation of her neighbors and, above all, to feel that she could decide on her own destiny, and that she did not need to be culturally and historically imprisoned anymore.

If, according to the Aristotelian view (2010, p. 67, translated), “the actuality of each thing, in effect, is generated by nature in the entity that exists in potential and in the appropriate matter”, women’s lives, essentially in contemporary times, tend to be invested with the power to meet the historical rule of man and the inferiority of the second sex, but even so, many of them – if not the majority – fail to enhance empowerment and make it into actuality or, which is the same, make their emancipation effective, concrete, solid, real. This is justified due to numerous conditions imposed by the patriarchal model of today’s society.

The feminist movement has, in essence, the aim of building a social body based on human rights, capable of establishing dialogue with equality between the sexes, which presupposes to women the understanding of their traditional condition of being inferior and the urgency of perceiving themselves with the potentiality to resist. However, there is a complex web of obstacles, both perpetuated by the male gender and implanted in many women, to hinder the act of change. Therefore, different factors make it impossible for potentiality to become actuality: actual emancipation.

4 FINAL THOUGHTS

Gender is a central issue in discussions about society. The cultural, economic, political and social inequality between the sexes marks the

history of human civilization from its beginnings to Contemporary times. The topic emerged in this scientific investigation with the purpose of understanding the social construction of the hierarchy between man and woman, of the roles and spaces granted to each of the sexes as if they were biological, static and, therefore, insurmountable traits, with emphasis on violence perpetrated within people's homes.

The analysis carried out in this study shows that the social structure has been established, since its beginnings, by the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. The construction of the State, in its modern contours, resulted from the Social Contract, but, at the same time, from the Sexual Contract, which means the institutionalization of the patriarchal system both in the private sphere, as an ancient characteristic, as well as in the public context. Society is organized in this way, with fixed roles and culturally established spaces for each sex, although male domination defends such a situation is intrinsic to human nature.

The public-private contrast is elementary, in this sense, for the understanding of the social pyramid. If men are given the monopoly of the public environment and, at the same time, rule in domestic relations, women are granted the private context, that is, the home, but under the status of subjugation, submission and subjection to male orders. Moreover, women have been historically considered as incomplete beings, whose existence, despite numerous secular restrictions, only seems to take effect in the company of men, as a really existing being.

The short story *Husband (Marido)*, by Lídia Jorge, portrays the patriarchal system. There is, on the one hand, a man in the condition of a husband, that is, the holder of a wife; on the other hand, a woman attached to that man. The characteristic situation is not only in the facticity such domination will to be found in men, but mainly in the feeling of subjugation, submission and subjection instilled in the woman's body and mind. It is as if she internalized the patriarchal discourse of the female subject as an incomplete being who depends on the existence of man.

Feminism, risen in the 19th century and significantly active in the 21st century, is configured as a movement aimed at building a society capable of dialoguing with each other without a hierarchy of sexes. However, many women – if not most – still carry with them the feeling of being “the thing” of men. Consequently, they face the impossibility of fighting the dictates of oppression and domination imposed by man. Such a context, however, is understandable if one considers the culturally formulated identity of women as a dependent being, since antique times until today.

The potentiality of female emancipation manifests when women become able to see themselves as complete beings, fully capable of change, equal to men. Empowerment requires the act of making oneself complete, promoting change, understanding oneself as an equal. Many women, however, are unaware of the possibility of fighting, facing and resisting male domination, and consequently maintain marital relationships, even when they are nurtured by violence, disrespect and violation of human rights, which proclaim equality between men and women.

There is an urgent need, therefore, to corroborate the starting hypothesis of this scientific investigation, of everyone – men and women – understanding themselves as human beings and members of the same society. The naturalization of male rule and the reduction of the female condition to dependency demands, in view of the above, the potentializing of cultural, economic, political and social change, in order to deconstruct the precepts of the patriarchal system and establish egalitarian dialogues between the sexes within society and the family.

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